LEST WE FORGET

This painting is a tribute to the F-6, a derivative of the Soviet Mig-19 made in China, which became the most numerously used jet fighter of the PAF.

After the 1965 war, Pakistan's need for a combat aircraft to replace the F-86 was promptly met by China. During the 36 years plus of its life in the PAF, 258 F-6s entered the PAF inventory and equipped 11 fighter squadrons of different lengths of time.

The F-6 was the first non-Western fighter capable of flying at supersonic speeds in level flight and had an impressive thrust-to-weight ratio of nearly 0.9:1 in a clean configuration with half of its fuel remaining. The fighter was extensively modified n the PAF to match its impressive agility with modern avionics, greater staying power and air-to-air missiles.

Three of these indigenously designed and integrated capabilities are visible in the painting:

the gondola belly tank for additional fuel, the two underwing Sidewinder missiles and one of the electronic warfare antennae behind the cockpit. Many PAF pilots accumulated thousands of flying hours on the F-6 and loved the reliability of its rugged airframe.

But no matter how well any pilot had mastered the F-6, this fighter demanded skilful handling and a finely tuned awareness of its flight characteristics before it could be exploited in combat. During the 1971 war Pakistan's F-6 were used both in the air defence and air support roles.

The pilots chalked up an impressive score. 8 IAF fighters destroyed and 2 damaged, for the loss of only one F-6, and they also crippled many Indian tanks. This much loved fighter was formally phased out of service at a ceremonial parade held at Samungli Air Base on 27 March 2002. The two-seat trainer version of the F-6 (FT-6) continues to serve in several squadrons of the PAF.

Painting By - Gp Capt S M A Hussaini (R)

+92-307-8162003